

CLAIMS**We claim:**

1. A method for determining the authenticity of a computer software product, the computer software product comprising a computer-readable medium and
5 a transponder, the computer-readable medium having stored thereon a copy of a computer program, the method comprising:
 - generating an electromagnetic field to energize the transponder;
 - receiving from the transponder a value of an identification number of a copy of
the computer program;
 - 10 analyzing the identification number value to determine whether the identification number value is valid; and
 - allowing or denying the installation of the copy of the computer program based on the analyzing step.
- 15 2. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - receiving a cryptologically-derived block of data transmitted by the
20 transponder; and
 - analyzing the block of data using a secret algorithm that is commonly shared with the transponder to authenticate the computer software product.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising receiving a randomly generated number from the transponder, wherein the analyzing step comprises: extracting a numerical value from the received block of data; and comparing the numerical value with the received randomly generated number.

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5. The method of claim 1, wherein the analyzing step comprises: determining which version of the program is stored on the computer-readable medium; and

10 determining whether the identification number is proper for the program version.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more unencrypted programs are part of a software package, and wherein the analyzing step comprises:

15 determining which version of the software package is stored on the computer-readable medium; and determining whether the identification number is proper for the software version.

7. A method for installing a software package on a computer, the method comprising:

20 executing an installation program of the software package, the installation program being stored on a computer software product comprising a transponder;

in accordance with the installation program, sending a radio frequency signal to a reader that is linked to the computer, thereby causing the radio frequency reader to query the transponder for a product identification number of the computer software product, wherein the product identification number identifies the particular copy of the software package being installed;

analyzing the product identification number to determine whether it is valid;
and

based on the analyzing step, determining whether or not to install the software on the computer.

8. A computer-readable medium having stored thereon computer-executable instructions for performing the method of claim 7.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the activating step comprises calling a function of an operating system of the computer to cause an activation signal to be sent to the reader.

10. The method of claim 7, further comprising:
displaying to a user a field for entering the product identification number;
performing the activating step in response to a user indicating a desire to have the product identification number automatically retrieved;
receiving the product identification number from the transponder; and
populating the field with the received product identification number.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising:

soliciting the user for a username and password to use in conjunction with the software package; and

5 storing the username and password in a memory of the transponder.

12. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

if, according to the analyzing step, the product identification number is determined to be valid, retrieving user-defined configuration information from the transponder;

installing the software package on the computer; and

10 configuring the software in accordance with the user-defined configuration information retrieved from the transponder.

13. A computer software product comprising:

a computer-readable medium having stored thereon programs comprising an application program and an installation program; and

a transponder attached to the computer readable medium, wherein the transponder transmits an authentication signal to a reader that is communicatively linked to a computer, the authentication signal representing data comprising the product identification number, thereby allowing the computer to make a determination of the authenticity of the computer software product and to install the application program based on the authenticity determination.

14. The computer software product of claim 13, wherein the transponder has a memory having stored thereon a secret algorithm shared with an installation program that controls the reader.

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15. The computer software product of claim 13, wherein the transponder has a memory having stored thereon a secret key shared with the installation program.

16. The computer software product of claim 13, wherein the computer-
10 readable medium has stored thereon a game program, and the transponder has a memory having stored thereon data comprising status information regarding an in-progress game.

17. The computer software product of claim 13, wherein the computer-
15 readable medium is an disk, the computer software product further comprising a counterbalance member disposed on the computer-readable medium so as to reduce the wobble of the computer-readable medium as it spins.

18. The computer software product of claim 13, wherein the transponder is
20 attached to a surface of the computer readable medium.

19. The computer software product of claim 13, wherein the transponder is embedded within the computer-readable medium.

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20. A system for discouraging unauthorized copying of a computer program, the system comprising:

a computer;

5 a computer software product comprising:

a computer-readable medium having stored thereon one or more programs including an installation program; and

a transponder having stored thereon a number for identifying the computer software product;

10 and a reader in communication with the computer,

wherein when the computer executes the installation program, the computer signals the reader to query the transponder for the number and analyzes the number to determine the authenticity of the computer software product.

15 21. The system of claim 20, wherein the computer-readable medium is an optical disk, the system further comprising:

an optical disk drive, wherein the reader is located next to the optical disk drive.

20 22. The system of claim 20, further comprising:

a handheld input device, wherein the reader is integrated with the handheld input device.

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23. The system of claim 20, further comprising an optical disk drive, wherein the reader is in series with a cable leading to the optical disk drive, and wherein data traveling between the computer and the optical disk drive via the cable are passed through the reader.

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24. The system of claim 20, further comprising:
an optical disk drive for reading the one or more programs from the computer-readable medium;

an antenna electrically coupled to the reader; and
10 a piece of adhesive material incorporating the antenna, the piece of adhesive material being attached to the optical disk drive.

25. An apparatus for use in preventing the unauthorized duplication of a computer program, the apparatus comprising:
15 a transponder having stored therein an identification number associated with a particular copy of the computer program.

26. The apparatus of claim 25, further comprising a means for attaching the transponder to a computer-readable medium having stored thereon the copy of the
20 computer program with which the identification number is associated.

27. The apparatus of claim 26, wherein the attaching means is a layer of adhesive disposed on a surface of the transponder.

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28. The apparatus of claim 26, wherein the attaching means is a piece of adhesive label disposed on a surface of the transponder.

5 29. A credit card having a hole that is sized to fit on a spindle of an optical disk reader of a computer, the credit card comprising:

a transponder having stored thereon data for allowing an RF reader communicatively linked to the computer to verify the authenticity of the credit card.

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